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The recognition of officially designated churches and unofficial house churches in China has long been controversial. Official church groupings have ties to international ecumenical bodies, while independent or underground churches, who meet in private houses, do not have official recognition and have faced persecution.

In a 2009 statement, **the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom** said, "The Chinese government has accommodated some religious practice, but repression of peaceful religious activity remains intense and widespread."

The WEA is a network of churches in 128 nations that represent some 420 million evangelical Christians. The IRD has long been critical of such ecumenical groupings as the National Council of Churches in the U.S. for what the IRD sees as theological liberalism.